

Effects of the Alternatives
Alternative B

Impacts associated with lands transfers are the same as identified in Alternative A. Because of the greater amount of acreage involved, the impacts would, correspondingly, also be greater.

Land uses would be restricted to those compatible with wilderness management on 67,889 acres. For example, ORV use would be prohibited and no utility developments could be installed.

In addition to the wilderness acres discussed above, lands activities would be limited to those not involving motor vehicle use on 450 acres. For example, a right-of-way application might be denied or modified because motor vehicles could not be used to install or maintain developments.

Other non-transfer lands actions would continue under constraints set out in the resource management guidelines (see Chapter 2) and Standard Operating Procedures (see Appendix E) with the same general impacts identified in Alternative A.

Wilderness

Shale Butte WSA (57-2). None of the WSA would be recommended as suitable for wilderness. This alternative would have no beneficial impacts on the wilderness resource. Activities such as off-road vehicle (ORV) use, livestock management, mining, and fire suppression could have adverse impacts on wilderness resources.

Although the entire WSA is accessible to trailbike use and, except for a number of very rough areas, four-wheel drive vehicles, recreational ORV use is presently low (less than 1,000 visits/year) in this unit. Long term use trends for the region (Idaho Department of Parks & Recreation 1977) indicate that ORV use could increase to levels that would have adverse impacts on wilderness values of naturalness and solitude in the WSA.

Livestock management would require the occasional use of vehicles on ways inside the WSA for various management activities. This use would have a minor adverse impact on solitude values in the WSA.

Although no mining claims exist within the WSA at present, development of new claims or leases would have an adverse impact on wilderness values of naturalness and solitude. The potential for locatable or leasable minerals occurring in the WSA is low (Fredericksen and Fernette 1983), and the probability of damage to wilderness resources from mineral development is also low.

Fire suppression activities inside the WSA could include the use of heavy equipment that would have an adverse impact on the wilderness value of naturalness. Since fires occur frequently (one every five years) there is a fair chance that over the long term some damage to the wilderness resource due to fire suppression activities would occur. Fires would continue to create

conditions that are unfavorable to vegetation that is representative of the potential natural vegetation for this area (Sagebrush-Steppe).

Sand Butte WSA (57-8). None of the WSA would be recommended as suitable for wilderness. Slight beneficial affects to naturalness in the WSA would be realized from having less impact on vegetation from livestock. This would be due to more even distribution of livestock, which would be brought about by better water distribution in the WSA. Activities such as off-road vehicle (ORV) use, livestock management, mining, and fire suppression could have adverse impacts on wilderness resources.

The entire WSA is accessible to trailbike use. In a few areas close to existing roads and ways it is also accessible to four-wheel drive vehicles. Although recreational ORV use is presently low (less than 1,000 visits/year) in this unit, long term use trends for the region (Idaho Department of Parks & Recreation 1977) indicate that ORV use could increase to levels that would have adverse impacts on wilderness values of naturalness and solitude in the WSA.

Facilities for livestock management would be developed that would have an adverse impact on the wilderness values of naturalness and solitude. One well and approximately eight miles of road would be constructed within the WSA. The road would affect naturalness on 36 acres in the unit. Frequent vehicle use to haul water during the spring and fall would adversely impact solitude on 5,091 acres in the WSA.

Although no mining claims exist within the WSA at present, new claims or leases and subsequent development would have an adverse impact on wilderness values of naturalness and solitude. The potential for locatable or leasable minerals occurring in the WSA is low (Fredericksen and Fernette 1983), and the probability of damage to wilderness resources from mineral development is also low.

Fire suppression activity inside the WSA could include the use of heavy equipment that would have an adverse impact on the wilderness value of naturalness. Some portions of the WSA have fires fairly frequently (three times in the last twenty years), although most of the WSA has burned at a much lower frequency. Given the fire history of this area, it is reasonable to assume that, over the long run, heavy equipment would be used in the unit for fire suppression. The use of this equipment would have an adverse impact on the wilderness value of naturalness.

Raven's Eye WSA (57-10). A portion of the WSA, 42,116 acres in size, would be recommended suitable for wilderness designation. The remaining 24,994 acres would be recommended as nonsuitable for wilderness. Beneficial impacts to those portions of the WSA recommended as suitable would be that all wilderness resources would be maintained. No impacts beneficial to the wilderness resource would be realized on the portion of the WSA recommended as nonsuitable. Activities such as off-road vehicle (ORV) use, livestock management, mining, and fire suppression could have adverse impacts on wilderness resources in the portion recommended as nonsuitable for designation.

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None of the WSA recommended as suitable for wilderness designation would be subject to off-road vehicle use. All of the 24,944 acres recommended non-suitable are accessible to trailbike use, and some areas along existing roads and ways are accessible to four-wheel drive vehicles. Recreational ORV use is presently low (less than 1,000 visits/year) in this unit. Long term use trends for the region (Idaho Department of Parks & Recreation 1977) indicate that ORV use could increase to levels that would have adverse impacts on wilderness values of naturalness and solitude in the nonsuitable portion of the WSA.

No adverse impacts from livestock management would occur in the suitable portion of the WSA. In the nonsuitable portion of the WSA, three miles of road would be constructed to facilitate water hauling from a new well facility. The road would adversely affect the wilderness value of naturalness on fourteen acres. Traffic from frequent water hauling during the spring and fall would adversely affect the wilderness value of solitude on 1,910 acres.

Although no mining claims exist within the WSA at present, new claims or leases and subsequent development would have an adverse impact on wilderness values of naturalness and solitude. The potential for locatable or leasable minerals occurring in the WSA is low (Fredericksen and Fernette 1983), and the probability of damage to wilderness resources from mineral development is also low.

Use of heavy equipment to suppress fire in the suitable portion would be restricted to minimize adverse effects on wilderness character. In the non-suitable portion of the WSA, fire suppression activities could include the use of heavy equipment that would have an adverse impact on the wilderness value of naturalness.

Little Deer (57-11). A portion of the WSA, 25,773 acres in size, would be recommended suitable for wilderness designation. The remaining 7,758 acres would be recommended as nonsuitable for wilderness. Beneficial impacts to those portions of the WSA recommended as suitable would be that all wilderness resources would be maintained. No impacts beneficial to the wilderness resource would be realized on the portion of the WSA recommended as nonsuitable. Activities such as off-road vehicle (ORV) use, livestock management, mining, and fire suppression could have adverse impacts on wilderness resources in the portion recommended as nonsuitable for designation.

None of the WSA recommended as suitable for wilderness designation would be subject to off-road vehicle use. Approximately 79 percent of the 7,758 acres recommended nonsuitable is accessible to trailbike use and four-wheel drive vehicles. Recreational ORV use is presently low (less than 1,000 visits/year) in this unit. Long term use trends for the region (Idaho Department of Parks & Recreation 1977) indicate that ORV use could increase to levels that would have adverse impacts on wilderness values of naturalness and solitude in the nonsuitable portion of the WSA.

Livestock management would require the occasional use of vehicles on ways inside the WSA for various management activities. This use would have a minor adverse impact on solitude values in the WSA.

Although no mining claims exist within the WSA at present, new claims or leases and subsequent development would have an adverse impact on wilderness values of naturalness and solitude. The potential for locatable or leasable minerals occurring in the WSA is low (Fredericksen and Fernette 1983), and the probability of damage to wilderness resources from mineral development is also low.

Use of heavy equipment to suppress fire in the suitable portion would be restricted to minimize adverse effects on wilderness character. In the non-suitable portion of the WSA, fire suppression activities could include the use of heavy equipment that would have an adverse impact on the wilderness value of naturalness.

Bear Den Butte WSA (57-14). None of the WSA would be recommended as suitable for wilderness. This alternative would have no beneficial impacts on the wilderness resource. Activities such as off-road vehicle (ORV) use, livestock management, mining, and fire suppression could have adverse impacts on wilderness resources.

Approximately 56 percent of the WSA is accessible to trailbike use. A much smaller area close to existing roads and ways is accessible to four-wheel drive vehicles. Although recreational ORV use is presently low (less than 1,000 visits/year) in this unit, long term use trends for the region (Idaho Department of Parks & Recreation 1977) indicate that ORV use will increase to levels that would have adverse impacts on wilderness values of naturalness and solitude in those portions of the WSA that are accessible.

Livestock management would require the occasional use of vehicles on ways inside the WSA for various management activities. This use would have a minor adverse impact on solitude values in the WSA.

Although no mining claims exist within the WSA at present, development of new claims or leases would have an adverse impact on wilderness values of naturalness and solitude. The potential for locatable or leasable minerals occurring in the WSA is low (Fredericksen and Fernette 1983), and the probability of damage to wilderness resources from mineral development is also low.

Fire suppression activity on 56 percent of the WSA could include the use of heavy equipment that would have an adverse impact on the wilderness value of naturalness. The remainder of the WSA is so barren of vegetation that fires of more than an acre or two rarely occur. In addition, that part of the WSA is so rugged that fire suppression using heavy equipment would not be attempted. Given the fire history of this area, it is reasonable to assume that, over the long run, heavy equipment would be used in the unit for fire suppression. The use of this equipment would have an adverse impact on the wilderness value of naturalness in those portions of the WSA accessible to heavy equipment.

Shoshone WSA (59-7). None of the WSA would be recommended as suitable for wilderness. This alternative would have no beneficial impacts on the wilderness resource. The only activity that would have an adverse impact on

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wilderness values is mining. The WSA is so rugged that it is not used by other activities such as livestock management, recreational ORV use, and fire suppression.

Although no mining claims exist within the WSA at present, new claims or leases and subsequent development would have an adverse impact on wilderness values of naturalness and solitude. The potential for locatable or leasable minerals occurring in the WSA is low (Fredericksen and Fernette 1983), and the probability of damage to wilderness resources from mineral development is also low.

Natural History

Project work that occurred in four of the AGI would be examined to ensure that access to sensitive areas would not be improved.

Resource use proposals would be examined closely to protect naturalness in the Vineyard Creek ACEC. The remainder of the proposed Dry Cataracts National Natural Landmark would be open to mineral material removal. Excavation of alluvial gravel deposits would adversely affect geological features that illustrate natural history related to the Bonneville Flood.

Resource use proposals would be examined closely to prevent degradation of natural history values related to the unique alcove ecosystem in the proposed Box Canyon National Natural Landmark.

Cultural Resources

Since any Bureau authorized or initiated action recognizes and accommodates cultural resources by virtue of our standard operating procedures (see Appendix H), the only activity which may damage these resources is unplanned public use. Such activities include unauthorized recreational vehicle use, artifact collection, and illegal excavation for materials and antiquities. The location of these activities is impossible to predict and may occur in spite of measures designed to exclude or limit them.

Effects of Alternative B would be the same as Alternative A except that those areas closed to ORV usage include 5,550 acres in high density cultural resource areas and 63,920 acres in low density cultural resource areas. ORV usage would be limited in 2,240 acres of high density cultural resource areas in the Cedar Fields SRMA. Limited disturbance on 78,120 acres would serve to protect sites on 7,685 acres of high density cultural resource areas. Limited disturbance refers to limited use of heavy equipment in fire suppression in WSAs recommended suitable, the Cedar Fields SRMA, Devil's Corral, and Areas of Geologic Interest.

Recreation

The growth rates discussed below are long-term (20-year) projections. The projected growth rates, both short-term (5-year) and long-term, are listed in Table 2-3 for various recreation activities.

Recreation growth, in general, would continue but at a slower rate than under present management as reflected in Alternative A. Some recreation activities would experience accelerated growth, and some would experience a decline from present growth rates. Recreation opportunities would generally decrease in quality. Recreationists would experience greater competition for recreation resources and recreation-related conflicts would increase.

Float boating would be the most impacted recreation activity under this alternative. Floating activity would increase 347 percent compared to a 400 percent gain if present management would continue. This would occur as a result of the transfer of the only two access points to the Murtaugh segment of the Snake River.

Pheasant hunting would increase 64 percent compared to 88 percent under present management because of the loss of Isolated Tracts and transfer areas. Some of these areas are huntable and most provide cover. An increase in agricultural acreage is not expected to fully compensate for the loss of cover and many of the transferred areas would probably be posted to exclude hunters, once in private ownership. Hungarian partridge hunting would be similarly affected, although to a lesser extent.

Nature study would experience a 46 percent increase compared to 40 percent under Alternative A. This would occur as a result of wilderness designation of portions of Raven's Eye and Little Deer WSAs and by encouraging the reduction of sedimentation in lower Vineyard Creek. Wilderness designation would improve or maintain the natural character of these areas by excluding disturbing influences such as ORVs, rangeland improvements, and potential utility or transportation corridors. Lower sediment levels in Vineyard Creek would enhance the natural character of the area by improving the fisheries habitat for spawning hybrid cutthroat trout and the visual quality of the stream. *The special designation status of the Box Canyon/Blueheart Springs and Vineyard Creek ACECs and the two WSAs would increase public awareness of the areas. This would also contribute to the increase in nature study.*

Off-road vehicle use would increase slightly as a result of lifting limitations on ORV use within a portion of the Snake River Rim Recreation Area. This increase would be moderated by a loss of some ORV opportunities in portions of Raven's Eye and Little Deer WSAs, which would be recommended as suitable for wilderness and closed to ORV activity.

Potential for developing a cross-country ORV trail between the Snake River Rim SRMA and Bear Trap Cave would be preserved. Tracts vital to development of the trail would be retained in Federal ownership.

Scenic quality in Cedar Fields would improve as a result of ORV limitations in the area. Future resource uses and proposals would be closely examined to prevent degradation of scenic quality in Vineyard Creek and Box Canyon.

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Soils

Erosion would increase by 13 percent to an average 5.4 tons/acre/year. Of the 1,178,989 acres in the planning area, 38,936 acres (3 percent) would have a severe erosion problem by the end of 20 years. This increase from present condition would be primarily due to increased livestock stocking rates, land treatments, and management facilities. These activities would reduce vegetation cover. In the case of land treatments, the actual effect would be short term at the time the vegetation and/or soil is disturbed. However, the effect has been averaged into the long term for this analysis. Erosion would be reduced on 1,968 acres of ORV closures or limitations, 1,700 acres by reducing wildfires, and on 150 acres of sand dunes proposed for seeding. Soil productivity could be reduced on 19,712 acres adjacent to and downwind from land transfers developed for agriculture *because of sand deposition from new farm fields*. Appendix I contains a discussion about changes in erosion rates and the equations used to estimate erosion rates.

Minerals and Energy

Wilderness designation would restrict mineral activities on 67,889 acres. New mining claims would be prohibited after wilderness designation, as well as sale or free-use of mineral materials. Valid existing rights of mining claimants would be protected. Few locatable mineral resources have been identified to date. No significant mineral resources are known to occur within the WSAs recommended suitable. Energy mineral leasing activities could be restricted to protect wilderness character. Areas within WSAs are considered to have low potential for oil and gas and geothermal energy production and there has been little or no exploration activity.

Minor restriction of mining activity would result from ORV limitations on 2,240 acres of lands designated mineral in character in the Cedar Fields SRMA.

Minor restriction of mineral lease development would result from surface occupancy restrictions in Vineyard Creek ACEC, Box Canyon/Blueheart Springs ACEC, and Areas of Geologic Interest.

Material sites currently in use on 620 acres would be lost to public use by transfer. *Possible mineral material deposits on 3,543 acres would be lost by transfer*. Loss of these material sites could cause considerable hardship and higher costs to highway departments and the public who depend upon these sites for mineral materials.

Transfer could create problems of split estate ownership, a situation where the surface is privately owned, but the subsurface mineral rights are Federally owned. This could make mineral exploration more complicated, time consuming, and expensive.